

# Murder of Baff Discloses Chicken Pullers' Gang Different From Others

Gangsters Combine Chicken Handling With Theft, Violence, Black-mail and Poisoning

THE murder of Barnett Baff last Tuesday night has brought the police face to face with a kind of gangster who is just a bit different from those whose exploits have filled the records at Headquarters. They have known of his existence, but it required a murder to make them understand what he was really capable of.

There have been all sorts of rackets in New York. Generally speaking they have usually been bound together solely by the personality of their leader. When the leader was shot or stabbed or sent to prison for a long time, the gang broke up and its members drifted about until they found a new leader. These gangsters were drawn from many sources. They might be employed in a great variety of callings. Their bond of union was never a particular employment.

Now the attention of the police is suddenly directed to a crowd of men who all make their living in the same way. It is the class of the "chicken pullers," and a numerous and powerful class it is.

The job of chicken puller does not appeal to the youth of serious intentions. Those who follow it are mostly ignorant and shiftless men. To take chickens from a freight car and transfer them to crates requires about as little intelligence as any employment in the world. Hence it is that those who unload the thousands of chicken laden cars that reach New York and New Jersey every year are drawn as a rule from the lowest and cheapest elements in the community.

The men who work with them always refer to them as "gorillas," "gorillas" or "hyenas"; that is, they refer to them in that way when the chicken pullers are not around. These appellatives imply that these men are about as nearly untamed as men living in civilized society can be. They have achieved their reputation. It has not been thrust upon them. Any man who has been in the poultry business will tell you that they live up to it.

New York city is a great consumer of poultry. Its immense Jewish population makes the demand here larger than in any other city and a great deal of the poultry shipped here is live poultry. Last year the receipts were nearly 6,000 carloads and they would have been much greater but for the floods in the middle West in the early part of the year. The live chickens reach the railroad terminals in crated cars. They have to be taken out, weighed and allotted to the consignees. They are taken from crates in the cars, handed out to the car door and chucked into other crates. That is the job of the chicken puller.

These men are not employed by the railroads. Each big dealer in the city has his crowd of pullers and a gang of pullers may work for a number of dealers. They travel from one railroad yard to another as their services are needed. They don't make very much money and their work leads them into temptation.

The chicken puller has long been recognized as a factor in the poultry business. It is a business where competition is keen and where methods are not always held up to a high standard. Where dealers inclined to crookedness do not care to besmirch their own hands they have found the chicken pullers



A Washington Market chicken stall.

willing to turn a trick if the money for it was forthcoming.

But your hard grained and experienced chicken puller regards it as his particular prerogative to steal all the fowls he can lay his hands on. He steals for his own use. He steals and sells to other people.

Railroad men will tell you that men of no other class working in the yards have to be watched so closely as these men. Every poultry dealer in the big markets will tell you that he figures on having so much of his property stolen every year. A great many of them are frank to confess that they now take it as a matter of course and make no effort to trace their feathered live stock.

In the investigation conducted two years ago by the District Attorney many side-lights were thrown on the chicken puller. There was a great deal said then about "sneaking" chickens. The chickens would be started while waiting in the railroad yards for a market and would then be fed with a paste food that contained liberal quantities of sand. They weighed more after that kind of feeding and it was the chicken pullers who got the job of feeding them.

The gang of chicken handlers has proved especially effective when it was desired to teach some dealer a lesson. Every once in a while there crops up a dealer who takes it into his head to do business in his own way. For him there is no such thing as "making the market once a week." He buys and he sells just as he pleases. He doesn't belong to any organization. He is a rank outsider, content with quick sales

and small profits. Now when such a man gets too obnoxious things begin to happen.

Generally has to make good with his fists as well as in other ways. A volley of verbal abuse is usually the forerunner



Barnett Baff, the murdered man.

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## Men Who Fired Shots Believed to Be Members of Dangerous Band Who Terrorize Poultry Dealers

His cars are unloaded and his chickens are weighed, but before they reach his market many of them die. It is a little thing to wring the neck of a chicken, and where men are handling hundreds of crates it is hard work to detect a hand reaching into a crate and destroying the market value of Miss Chickie.

Barnett Baff had this experience and others with the chicken handlers. So many of his horses died of poisoning that he had to get automobile delivery trucks. He tried once to take into the yards his own gang of handlers. They were a tough lot, these men, but they were as schoolboys in the hands of the men whose places they tried to take. There was nothing for Baff to do but go back to the old gang.

For the most part the chicken handlers are gangsters of the slugging kind. Their rows among themselves no longer attract much attention. A railroad man said yesterday that he had seen hundreds of fist fights in his time. When a new man comes into the yard he gen-

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## A LAWYER'S ANSWER TO GERMAN APPEAL FOR AMERICAN SYMPATHY

ONE American's opinion of the "European War" is the title of a brochure by Frederick W. Whitridge, issued by E. P. Dutton & Co. It is a frank, forcible and absolutely sincere reply to the German appeals for American sympathy.

No mincing of matters, no exaggeration, no subtle arguments, no propaganda. Just a candid examination of the German position as it looks to an able American lawyer, who admits having spent the happiest years of his life in Germany.

In the present great European conflict, says Mr. Whitridge, the United States is neutral, and under any circumstances of which I can conceive, it ought to and will remain neutral. Why, therefore, the sympathies and the opinions of America should be of importance to any of the contestants, I do not understand. I am informed, however, that the German Government has established here a very persistent, expensive and, of course, efficient publicity department, which is appealing to Americans for their sympathy and endeavoring to make them believe a number of things which at present they do not believe at all.

For many years certain German publicists have been writing about "a day of reckoning with England." They have not been very explicit about the account on which the reckoning was to be had, but generally the day of reckoning was that upon which it was decided whether many desirable things in the possession of England should be taken away and made German. For nearly as many years also the youth of Germany, especially in the navy, have been drinking to the toast of "The Day."

"The Day" has at last come, and brought with it the most gigantic and the most wicked war of the whole Christian era. Germany has made an elaborate formal statement of its position. England and Russia have published in full the correspondence leading up to the war, and from Germany many appeals have been made for the sympathy and approval of America. Professors have appealed to the universities, clergymen to the churches, the professional German-Americans to everybody, and among many others one pamphlet with no less a title than "Truth" has been issued over the signature of Herr Ballin of the Hamburg-American Steamship Company, Prince Buelow and a number of important names, to the countrymen of Washington and Lincoln.

It might be a sufficient answer to all of these appeals to point out that the Triple Alliance was, by its terms, for defensive purposes, and Italy, the third member of the alliance, who was supposed to be the others replied: "But you have not been attacked. You have taken the initiative, and therefore we are absolved from our contract."

It is as clear to me as the daylight that the invasion of the neutrality of Belgium was the proximate cause of the

## Frederick W. Whitridge Gives Frank and Sincere Opinion of Results of Examination of Kaiser's Position--Calls Colonial Empire One of Germany's Most Dangerous Delusions

under an obsession about her own grandeur and popularity to make such a series of egregious blunders.

Suppose the Germans had this year followed the same course as that of Prince Bismarck in 1870, and France had been invaded as it was in that year by the way of Alsace and Lorraine, the Germans would by this time have been as far advanced into France as they are now. They would have come with clean hands, they would have escaped the losses they have suffered at the hands of the Belgians, they probably would not have had England on their hands or else its hypocrisy and cant would have been unmasked, and they would not have lost every friend they had. What can we think of such diplomacy? And as if they had not made blunder enough the Germans have now made the capital mistake of utterly despising their adversaries.

The English "mildreds" with Waterloo on their lips used to be the most offensive people in Europe. They were ousted by the Americans with their vulgar extravagance and their ignorant comparisons of everything they thought they saw with what they remembered in "God's own country." But during the past decade the Germans have become easily the most objectionable people to be seen in the inns and on the highways of the Continent. Mr. Price Collier called them the "bores of Europe," to the intense displeasure of the Berlin press, when he appeared at court functions at the head of the London.

It is not the individual Englishman whom Germans dislike, but England as a Power; they despise her as they do all other nations except perhaps America, which they fear as a commercial rival. The German writers on the war since it has begun all say that England is jealous of Germany and therefore seized the opportunity to attack her, but in all my conversations with Germans I have found the reverse to be true. I have noticed a curious mixture of envy and contempt for England.

The Germans, however, really believed that England was worn out politically, commercially and on the sea, and that its army was negligible. This feeling has occasionally blazed up during the last twenty years, as at the time of the Kaiser's telegram to Kruger during the Boer war, at the time of the Algerian conference and during the Moroccan crisis. The Kaiser himself has been accused of being too friendly with England, and now that all this smoldering envy, dislike and even hate have kindled into the red flame of war the Government, the public and the press have let themselves go indeed.

Then we do not like the way the

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Most of these men are of the same nationality. Their gang spirit is racial as well as occupational. They have grown up with their customs and have formed certain ideas about it that are hard to overcome. Down at the bottom of this business they hold their unenviable own.

Some of the dealers who have known them and who fear them think it will be a good thing if the responsibility for this murder is definitely fixed upon some member of the gang. They think that would impress the police with the fact that they are a real menace to men who want to carry on their business in a decent way.

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left the hill and ran out into the fire. While running he

burns which caused his death. Then swerved from his course to spare the children.